

What's It All About?



A Guidebook For
Youth In Out-Of-Home-Care



It's All About Me!

Name: _____

Address: _____

My ILP Specialist is:

_____ Phone: _____

Very Important Names and Numbers:

Case Manager: _____ Phone: _____

Supervisor: _____ Phone: _____

Deputy Juvenile Officer: _____ Phone: _____

Guardian Ad Litem/
Casa Worker: _____ Phone: _____

Family Court Judge: _____ Phone: _____

Life Skills Teacher _____ Phone: _____

Others: _____ Phone: _____

Others: _____ Phone: _____

This book is dedicated to Missouri's youth in Out-of-Home care

If you are a teenager who lives in a DFS “placement” outside your own home, this handbook should help answer some of your questions. It deals with subjects that may be of special interest to you, such as school, money, clothing and preparing for your future.

If you have any questions after reading this handbook, please talk to your social worker, foster parent/care provider or ILP Specialist.



Missouri Department of Social Services
P.O. Box 88
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What Is Out-Of-Home Care?

Out-of-home care is an alternative living situation for you when, for a variety of reasons, you cannot remain in your own home.

Reasons for being placed in out-of-home care might include the following:

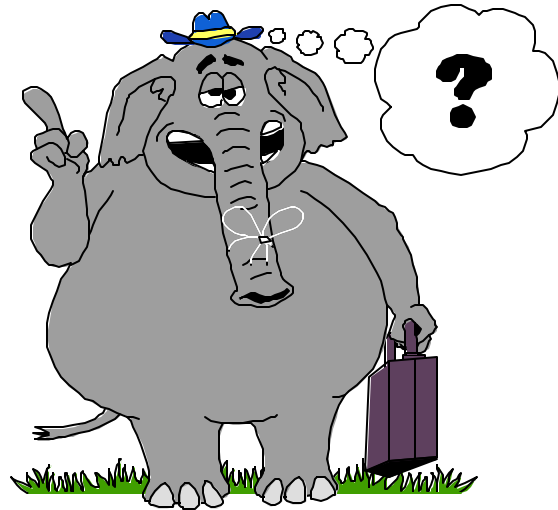
1. Parents or caretakers are unable to give necessary physical or emotional care or supervision.
2. Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.
3. Parents or caretakers are unable to deal with your behavior.

The decision to place you in out-of-home care is made by a Family or Juvenile Court after reviewing information regarding your family and situation.

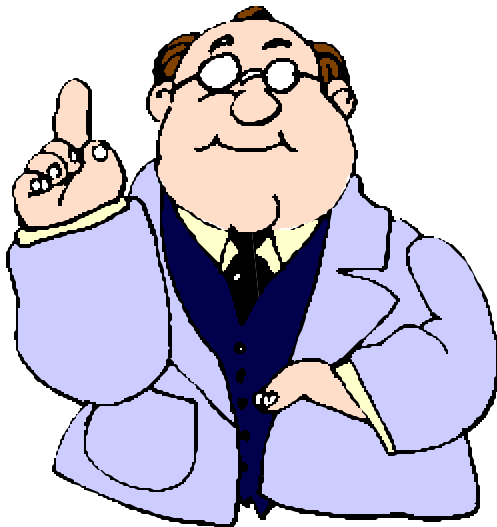
There are different kinds of places where you can stay while in out-of-home care. You could be placed with a relative, in a family foster home, in a group home, in a residential treatment facility, or in a hospital setting.

Placement in out-of-home care is made in order to see that you are in a safe environment and to give you and your family time to resolve the problems, which led to your placement. You may learn new ways of communicating, of dealing with feelings, or handling problems. You might also learn better ways to make good choices for your future.

There could be many different people (social workers, therapists, counselors, foster parents, child care workers, juvenile officers) working with you and your family. It is important that you work with all of these people in order to have a successful placement. Everyone is there to help you!



Going Into A Placement: Helpful Hints



Being placed in out-of-home care is not an easy thing to go through. It is very typical for you to experience many different feelings . . . anger, sadness, anxiety, fear, and sometimes even relief. You can help yourself feel better about your situation by talking about your feelings and asking questions. You are not alone. There are others in similar situations.

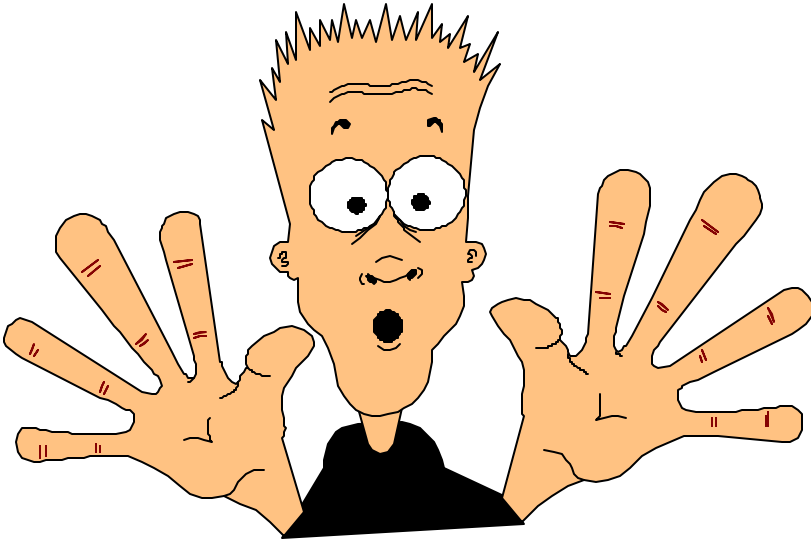
When you enter a placement, it is often a good idea to ask about rules, expectations, and routines. This will give you some idea of what to expect and can make you feel more comfortable. You'll probably have to get used to a whole new routine. The important thing to remember is that people are available to help you, but you can't get help if you don't talk about problems or concerns. And again, don't be afraid to ask questions!

Rules, Rules, Rules!

No matter where you are or what you do, there are rules that you have to follow. As every family and living situation is different, the rules in your out-of-home placement will probably be different from the rules you have been used to following.

Family foster homes and group homes may set their own rules and consequences for breaking rules, as long as they are within DFS guidelines.

Some rules may be more strict than others, but remember, nobody is picking on you.



Your care providers also make the day-to-day decisions about your activities, duties around the house, etc. However, your own family's wishes are considered, especially around issues such as religious participation. The care provider can ask you to attend religious functions, but they can not force you to participate.

DFS expects all care providers to have rules. Rules are a form of discipline that teaches you self-control and that there are consequences for behavior. However, discipline should never be abuse. Acts which cause pain, such as hitting, beating, shaking, tying, cursing, threatening, denial of meals, and degrading remarks about you or your family is not acceptable.

It's important to communicate with your care providers to make sure you understand their expectations. A good way to do this is to complete a worksheet with the provider, which outlines the household rules and describes the consequences when rules are broken. A sample you can use for this activity can be found on the next page. If you have disciplinary concerns, it is important to discuss them with your social worker.

Household Rules Worksheet

Sample

Rule	Consequence

The rules and consequences identified on this worksheet have been discussed and explained.



Care Provider _____ Date _____

Care Provider _____ Date _____

Youth _____ Date _____

Rights and Responsibilities

As a youth in out-of-home placement, you have certain rights and responsibilities. Your family and social worker also have rights and responsibilities. DFS, the Court, your parents and care providers play a large part in the success of your placement. However, the most important part of responsibility lies with you. It's a good idea to discuss this list with your care provider and your social worker.

Rights

1. To receive a nurturing family life experience, including guidance, affection and appropriate discipline.
2. To be protected from abuse and/or neglect.
3. To visit and communicate with family members as stated in the case plan and be notified of any changes. The Court could decide that it is in your best interest to limit contact with your family.
4. To be told about family support team meetings, permanency planning reviews, and court hearings so that you can participate or have input about the plans being made concerning your life.

Responsibilities

1. To participate with your social worker and care providers in developing rules and guidelines and to follow them.
2. To talk with a responsible adult about any kinds of abuse or neglect by your family, care providers or any other person.
3. To help in the development of the visitation plan. To behave responsibly during visits.
4. To participate in your family support team meetings, permanency planning reviews, and court hearings by attending in person or being kept informed through letters and telephone calls.

Rights

5. When required, to receive physical, dental, and eye exams upon initial placement and other medical care, as needed, thereafter. Also, to receive treatment as prescribed.
6. To be placed in a least restrictive setting that will best meet your needs and be as close to your home as practical, under the circumstances.
7. To receive information about the circumstances requiring your initial and continued placement.
8. To participate in school, religious, cultural and neighborhood activities as negotiated with your care provider.
9. To maintain confidentiality on all information in your record and your family's record.
10. To have a permanent plan, which may be to return to your family, adoption, or placement in another permanent living arrangement.

Responsibilities

5. To cooperate in keeping scheduled appointments and to follow any prescribed medical treatment.
6. To be supportive of your placement.
7. To ask your social worker or care providers to fully explain the circumstances requiring your placement, if you do not understand.
8. To conduct yourself in a responsible and appropriate manner while participating in these activities.
9. To talk with your social worker and care providers about what you consider confidential.
10. To take part in developing your permanency plan. To commit yourself and take responsibility for your plan.

Rights

11. To receive prior notice, when possible of any placement changes.
12. To have regular contact with your social worker.
13. To attend school.
14. To make a formal (written) complaint about the services that you receive while you are in placement, if dissatisfied.
15. To have privacy. You have privacy to an extent, unless there is reason to believe that you may harm yourself or others.
16. To receive the basic rights of food, clothing and shelter and to possess and take with you personal belongings.

Responsibilities

11. To ask your social worker or care provider to explain this if you do not understand.
12. To keep scheduled appointments with your worker and discuss current problems openly. To phone your worker when you need to talk to her/him.
13. To achieve as much as possible and not skip classes.
14. To be honest with your complaint – what happened, why it happened.
15. To respect the privacy of others in your out-of-home care setting.
16. To take care of your clothing and personal items.

Rights and Responsibilities of Your Own Family

While you are in placement, your family also has certain rights and responsibilities. The following are some of these, but not limited to just these:

1. To help explain to you the reason for your placement.
2. To be informed of and to participate in all case planning and permanency planning reviews and to know what changes are expected in order for you to return home.
3. To work with DFS toward achieving a permanent plan for you and to be told of any changes being considered.
4. To maintain contact with you through planned visits, phone calls and letters unless restricted by the Court.
5. To keep DFS informed of their address, telephone, job, income, marriage, or other living arrangements and changes affecting members of your family.
6. To give permission for your medical care.
7. To provide financial support for your care according to DFS or Court determination of their ability to pay.
8. To be part of your life through activities, such as transportation for visits and attendance at school conferences, unless restricted by the Court.
9. To give permission, if necessary, for you to travel out-of-state.
10. To make a formal (written) complaint about the services they have received from DFS if dissatisfied.
11. To have information about your health, special development, progress in school and behavior.
12. To attend any Court hearings involving you.
13. To work toward your timely return home by making the necessary changes or correcting conditions which led to your placement and to receive every possible assistance and service from the agency in order to do this.

Rights and Responsibilities of Care Providers

Your care providers have been approved to provide care by DFS and have agreed to accept you into their home or facility. Listed below are some of their rights and responsibilities:

1. To accept you and treat you with respect and dignity.
2. To provide for your daily care including food, shelter, clothing and personal care.
3. To guard the confidential nature of information about you.
4. To help you achieve self-discipline in your home, school, and social life.
5. To have regular contact with a DFS social worker who will offer services as needed.
6. To participate in permanency planning reviews and cooperate with DFS by following the written case plan.
7. To assist your social worker by sharing information about you that is important in making plans for you.
8. To help prepare you for leaving your placement and going to your next placement whether it is returning home, another placement, or independent living.
9. To encourage you to work hard in school, allow you time to do your homework, and send you to school regularly, if you are enrolled.
10. To help you deal with your feeling about being in placement.
11. To support your case plan for visitation and relationship with your family.
12. To assist you with your lifebook, a collection of personal mementoes, family and placement histories, and life and growth information.

What does your social worker do?

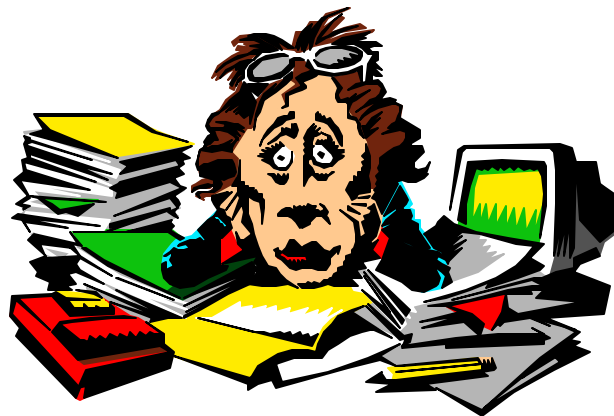
Your social worker, most often an employee of DFS, works with you, your parents, and care providers to provide a healthy environment for you. Here is a list of some of your worker's responsibilities:

1. To choose the least restrictive and most appropriate placement for you.
2. To tell all people involved about the policies and procedures of foster care.
3. To arrange reasonable visitation with parents, unless a Court order has restricted or denied visits.
4. To guard the confidential nature of information about you.
5. To provide or arrange services to you and your family which may help solve the problems which led to your placement.
6. To provide services to you and your care provider by supporting your present placement.
7. To coordinate and participate in developing a written case plan for you and provide the necessary support services to you, your family and your care provider to accomplish the goals set out in the plan.
8. To have contact with you at least once a month or as outlined in your case plan.



9. To inform the Court of your situation and make recommendations about future planning.
10. If you are 16 years of age or older, to develop an independent living case plan based on an assessment of your life skills and offer services for preparation of independent living.

While your individual case is very important to your social worker, remember that he/she also has many other cases and duties to take care of every day. Your social worker can help you the most if you always keep scheduled appointments and openly discuss problems **before** they become emergencies.



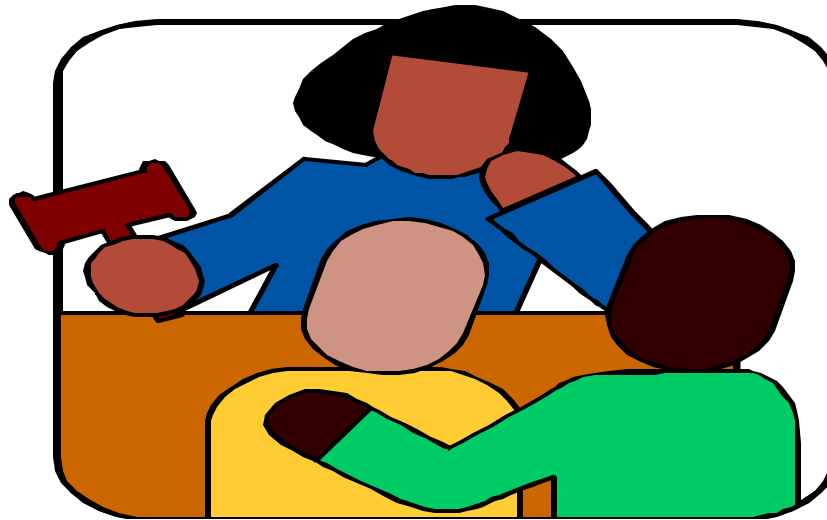
CONFIDENTIALITY

All information in your record and your family's record is confidential. Information can only be given or shared in accordance with agency policy, State and Federal law. All information is shared with the Court. In order to meet your needs, certain confidential information about your family, reasons for your placement, and medical and school history may be shared with your care provider. Your care provider is required to guard the confidential information about you and your family that is given to them. Some of your friends and acquaintances may wonder about why you are no longer living with your family. They may ask questions that make you feel uncomfortable. While they may really care about you, they do not have a right to know anything unless you want to tell them.



It is very important that you talk with your social worker concerning information that is sensitive to you and ways you can deal with questions from others. You may also want to discuss personal confidentiality issues such as mail, telephone calls and diaries.

You may request to have access to your DFS case record. If there are concerns regarding you reviewing your record, your social worker may seek guidance through supervisory channels.



Here comes the judge

Most youth in the custody of DFS are involved with the Family or Juvenile Court because they have been abused or neglected or abandoned by their parents. You can also become involved with the Court if you are truant, if you break laws which apply only to youth, or if you commit a crime.

When you become involved with the Court, you are usually assigned a Deputy Juvenile Officer (DJO). Your DJO will probably talk with you when you first enter foster care about why you are in placement. Your DJO is the person who handles the legal part of your case. If you have questions about how the Court works, your DJO is a good person to talk with.

When you become involved with the Court, you will probably have an attorney appointed to represent you in Court. If you are involved because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, your attorney is called a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL). Your GAL is there to represent you in Court, express your wishes and consider what is in your best interest. It's a good idea to get to know your GAL before Court. You may request another GAL, if you feel that you are not being understood. If you are involved because you have committed a crime, you will probably be assigned a public defender.

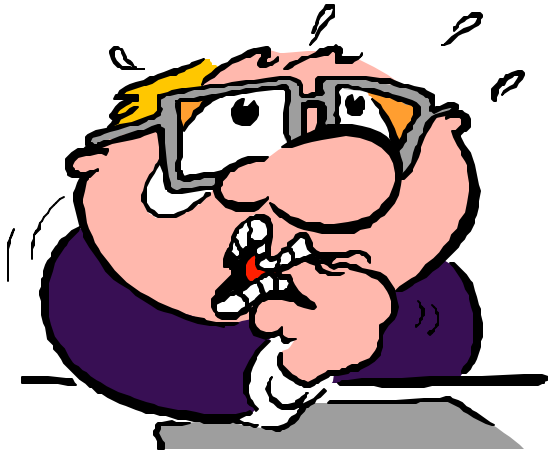
Your parents also have the right to have an attorney. Their attorney could be someone they hire or someone appointed by the Court.

There may also be another attorney involved with your case. Your DJO could have an attorney who assists in presenting information regarding your situation to the Court.

You will probably have to go to several Court hearings. These hearings are held before a judge or hearing officer, sometimes called a commissioner. You may have to testify at the hearings. All the attorneys will have the chance to ask you questions. Sometimes the judge might even ask you questions.

At your hearings, the judge (or commissioner) listens to everything that everyone says. After all the information has been presented to the Court, a decision (disposition) will be made about your situation and what is best for you. If you do not agree with the Court's decision, you have the right to appeal the decision. Your lawyer can help you with this. Remember, a Court order must be obeyed. If you do not, you could get in trouble.

Once you are under jurisdiction of the Court (formally involved with the Court and have them involved in your life) and in placement, you will have an annual review hearing.



Do I Really Have To Go?

Going to Court can be frightening. It's perfectly normal to feel nervous. Many adults also get nervous when they have to go to Court. Different jurisdictions may request your presence and may allow a waiver for attendance.

Here are some tips to help you feel better about going to Court:

- * Ask to be present in the courtroom.
- * If you don't understand what the hearing is about, talk with your social worker or GAL or DJO. They should be able to help.
- * Find out about the kind of questions you might be asked.
- * Dress appropriately. No tank tops, halter tops, or ragged jeans.
- * If you can, visit the courtroom before the hearing.
- * Listen carefully to the questions you are asked and answer as best as you can. If you don't understand a question, say so. If you don't have an answer for a question, say so.
- * Always answer truthfully and in a respectful manner.
- * Some questions or information may upset you. Look at someone who cares if you feel yourself getting upset. Sometimes, just seeing a friendly face can help.
- * Try to stay calm and relaxed. Do not act angry even if a question makes you feel angry.



When You Don't Think Something Is Fair

There are probably going to be times when you do not agree with how things are going. Sometimes you may not feel that your social worker, your care provider, or your own parents are treating you fairly or listening to you. It is best if you are able to discuss these feelings with your social worker or care provider and try to straighten out the problem. They will be more likely to listen to what you have to say, and to respond positively if you are calm and respectful, even if you are feeling angry or upset.

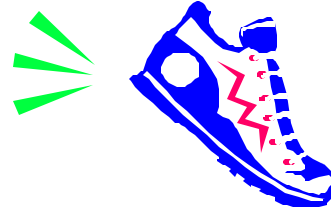
If you feel that a decision or action is not fair and discussions do not resolve it, there are certain situations where you can make a written formal complaint. Ask your social worker or care provider for more information about this. Another option is to complete the youth postcard in the back of this handbook.

You also have the right to confidential communication with your Guardian Ad Litem to discuss concerns regarding your situation. If you do not know the name of your GAL, ask your social worker or contact your Deputy Juvenile Officer at the Court.

Clothing Money

When you first go into placement your social worker and care provider will help you determine what your clothing needs are. You are entitled to adequate seasonal clothing while you are in care.

If you are in need of clothing at the time you are placed, you will be able to receive up to \$250.00 in a clothing allowance. Your social worker can provide you with a list of stores that will accept your clothing letter. Another option is to purchase the clothes yourself and save the receipts. The State will reimburse you for your expenses.

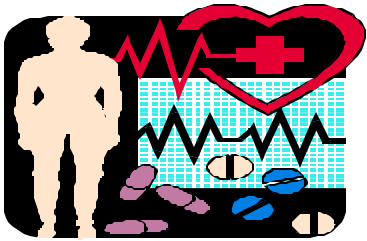


While your opinion about what type of clothes you wish to wear is important and should be considered, remember that your care provider has to keep in mind the cost of each item and how many different clothing items you will need. If you want additional clothing, you may be able to buy it with money you earn or your family may be able to help. Some youth like to buy good used clothes to make their dollars go further. You are responsible for maintaining/taking good care of your clothing once it has been purchased.

If you stay in care, you will be entitled to an annual clothing allowance of \$250.00. You will receive this allowance on the “anniversary date” of the month and day you entered care. You may choose to spend a partial amount and save the rest for purchasing clothing later in the year.

TIP: Mark your clothing and personal items with your name using a permanent marker.

Here's to Your Health



When you are initially placed in out-of-home care or if you live in an area of the state that does not participate in Managed Care, Missouri Medicaid will cover your medical needs. You will receive a Medicaid identification card that authorizes you to obtain medical care. Many people think Medicaid pays for all health care. This is not true. Medicaid does not pay for some care and has limits on some care. Make sure the doctor accepts Medicaid payments before using them.

If you live in a region that participates in Managed Care, your placement provider and/or social worker will assign you to a managed care plan within 90 days of when you come into out-of-home care that will best meets your needs. There are several health plans offered through this program and each plan is made up of doctors, hospitals and clinics. A Primary Care Physician will be chosen from your health plan, who will become your personal physician. Once you have been enrolled in a plan, your placement provider will receive a managed care identification card for you, which will be taken with you when getting any medical services.

Your medical coverage entitles you to receive routine medical care, hospitalizations, eye care, hearing tests, dental services and counseling. It also includes a complete yearly physical examination. If you have special medical

needs, you should be talking to your social worker and/or placement provider to make them aware of those needs. For medical needs not routinely covered under Managed Care or Medicaid, contact your social worker about “special expenses”.

Youth who make the decision to have sexual relations will be **at risk** for pregnancy, AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases (STD's). There are many community resources, including the public health department that can assist you with prevention information on sexually transmitted diseases, Aids, and pregnancy. If services are needed to treat any of these conditions, Managed Care and Medicaid will cover the cost of medical care.



Permanency Planning



During the time you are in placement, regular conferences called Family Support Team (FST) Meetings will be held to develop and review the permanency plan for you and your family. The placement is meant to be temporary. The purpose of the permanency plan is to make sure that, you receive proper care while in out-of-home placement, services are provided to your parents to improve the conditions in their home, and to assist in your return home or to another permanent placement.

People who can attend these conferences include you, your parents, your care providers, your social worker and his/her supervisor, your Juvenile Officer, and your Guardian ad Litem. Depending on your situation others may be invited such as, teachers, school counselors, mental health therapists, relatives, or your Independent Living Specialist.

If any of the participants cannot attend in person, they may be included through written reports, letters or telephone calls.

When possible, your permanency plan should be initiated during the first 24-hour contact with you and your family. It is completed through the participation of all members of the FST at the 72-hour meeting. Your permanency plan should be completed within 30 days of when you were placed in out-of-home care.

Generally, the FST will meet at the 30-day interval and meet every 30 days until the court adjudication hearing occurs to review progress, revise the treatment plan, and recommend that you return home or another option. The entire team should be invited to meet again within six months of the first FST meeting and at six-month intervals thereafter. The Court is also required to hold dispositional review hearing every six months.

Despite yours, your family's, and your social worker's best efforts, it may not be possible for you to return home to your family. In these situations, we have to look at other permanency options, such as:

1. Adoption,
2. Guardianship with a relative,
3. Kinship Care,
4. Other permanent placements, such as living on your own.

If you are a youth in DFS custody, at age 18 you have the right to request that the Court release you from DFS custody. However, you may wish to remain in custody if you are still in school and/or do not believe you are ready to live on your own. There are advantages to remaining in care until you are 21. If you plan to go to college or vocational school, you may be eligible to receive assistance with tuition and books, a monthly maintenance payment and medical coverage. Information on the Chafee – Making Choices Toward Independence Program, which can help you prepare for living on your own, is in the next chapter.

Making Choices Toward Independence

Many youth in DFS custody look forward to being “on their own” and yet are uncertain about what they are going to do when that day arrives.

It is never too early for any teen to begin thinking about the skills they need to live independently. For example, do you know how to fill out job applications or handle job interviews? Will you need additional education or training to reach your goals in life? Where can you get this education or training and how will you pay for it? Do you know how to rent an apartment, cook meals, or buy a car? Who would you call if you had a problem or needed someone to talk to?

The Chafee – Making Choices Toward Independence Program is designed to encourage you to begin thinking and learning about what you may need to live independently. At age 13, you are eligible to participate in the CHOICES Program. CHOICES is directed towards assisting you in making better, informed decisions and focuses on building healthy relationships, self respect, goal setting, avoiding conflict, and better ways to communicate.

At age 15 or 16, after you have completed the CHOICES Program, you may be eligible to participate in the intensive 6 to 9 month life skills training and support groups. The agency has a wide variety of other programs available that can assist you in preparing for your future. Some of these programs include the following:

- ☺ **Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP):** This program offers youth, 16 to 21, part-time employment opportunities. When a youth receives a job through this program, he/she is assigned a mentor at the work site. The mentor maintains on-going contact and support in order to provide encouragement and serve as a role model.

- ☺ **Peer Counseling:** Selected teens in out-of-home care have been trained and certified to help other youth who may be experiencing difficulties with family members, friends, school or placement providers. Peer counselors have often experienced and overcome similar problems. They can also help recently placed youth understand the agency and Court procedures. This service is limited to specific areas of the state.
- ☺ **Transitional Living Program (TLP):** The purpose of the TLP is to provide supportive placement opportunities for older out-of-home care youth in which they can practice the skills learned in the life skills classes. This is an important resource for youth whose permanency plan is not reunification with their families, but another permanent placement, such as living on their own. In order to meet the full range of needs, we have several options available.

Transitional Living Advocate (TLA): The Transitional Living Advocate Program provides short-term placement opportunities for older youth who are preparing for independent living. The advocate is an adult, who provides a youth a safe place to stay, continued life skills training, encouragement and guidance in regard to employment, education and/or training, and preparation for a successful transition from DFS custody. Youth must be at least 16 years old and attending or successfully completed the intensive 6 to 9 month life skills training. Other attributes include good decision-making skills, clear understanding of program expectations, ability to manage money, and be willing to maintain employment.

Youth are encouraged to have pre-placement visits with a potential advocate to increase the likelihood of a successful match. Once a TLA placement occurs, the youth receives \$586 per month maintenance. \$450 per month is paid by the youth to the advocate for food and rent expenses and life skills training. The youth uses \$136 per month for other expenses such as clothing, school/work, personal hygiene, transportation, etc.

Transitional Living Group Home: A specialized residential group home placement for youth, 16 years and older to concentrate on preparation for independent living and completion of their

educational/vocational programs. Youth are involved in making decisions and are expected to maintain employment and develop goals and plans for their future. Youth must be attending or have successfully completed the intensive 6 to 9 month life skills training.

Single and Scattered Site Apartments: This program offers youth, 17 years and older from residential treatment facilities, the opportunity to continue skills practice and prepare for their future in an apartment setting. Youth in this type of living situation receive support and guidance, but supervision is minimal. To be considered for this option, youth need to demonstrate the ability to make responsible decisions, be willing to maintain employment, and have a clear understanding of the financial and emotional demands of residing in an apartment. Youth who have already had a successful experience in one of the other transitional programs might find the adjustment easier. Youth must have successfully completed the intensive life skills training.

- ☺ **Independent Living Arrangement (ILA):** A state approved and subsidized placement option which allows youth, ages 17-21, to live in the community. Types of housing youth might select would include a house or apartment, boarding home, or college dormitory. Any youth considered for an ILA must have demonstrated responsible conduct for at least one year and be capable of managing his/her own finances. There are several other requirements for this program, which you can discuss with your social worker, but the youth must have successfully completed the intensive life skills training.

Leaving placement and living on your own is a big step and can be an exciting and scary time. It is normal to have mixed feelings about it. By thinking and planning ahead, you will be much better prepared to successfully take this step when the time comes.

If you are 16 years or older, your social worker will offer you services for independent living preparation. An independent living case plan will be developed to help you progress towards your goals.

Say What?

A Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Appeal: Filing a petition (legal request) in a higher court by an interested person in an attempt to have a decision of a lower court changed. An appeal must be made within thirty (30) days after the date of the lower court's order. A lawyer must be consulted about filing an appeal.

Case Manager: The social worker in the county of court jurisdiction who has the responsibility for coordinating all services delivered to you and your family. The case manager may or may not provide all of these services directly, but must make sure that the services needed to accomplish the goals of the permanency plan are made available.

Chafee – Choices Toward Independence Program – Replaces the former Independent Living Program. Services are available to help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 and expands the program to help youth who have left foster care after age 18, but have not yet reached age 21. (See attached brochure).

CHOICES – A program for youth 13-15 years of age to assist them in making better, informed decisions and preparing them for the more formal Independent Living Life Skills classes.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA): A responsible adult, other than a Guardian ad Litem (GAL), who is appointed by the Court to represent your best interest while you are under the jurisdiction of the court and in the custody of DFS.

Court Hearings:

1. Protective Custody Hearing: A court hearing held to determine whether you should be kept away from your parents until a full hearing on neglect and abuse allegations can take place.

2. Adjudicatory Hearing: This hearing is held to determine whether you are homeless, abused, neglected, or dependent and in need of the Court's services. The Judge hears testimony to decide if there is evidence for you to be in Out-of-Home Care.
3. Dispositional/Review Hearing: A court hearing to determine whether you will be returned to your parent's custody, remain in the custody of DFS, or be placed in the custody of someone else. A judge may decide to place custody with your parents, but require supervision by a DFS social worker.
4. Permanency Hearing: At a minimum of one time per year, a hearing is scheduled to review your situation and discuss your permanency plan. You can request a review hearing at any time, but the Court may use its discretion to determine whether a special hearing will be held.
5. Termination of Parental Rights (TPR): An action, taken by the court, which legally brings to an end a parent's right to be involved with or make decisions in your life.

Court Jurisdiction: The authority of the Family or Juvenile Court to act, if it is determined that you are delinquent, dependent, abused, or neglected.

Custody: Custody means the Juvenile Court decides who is responsible for you. The responsible person shall: 1) provide food, shelter, and clothing (subject to reimbursement by the parents as part of parental responsibility); 2) supervise, protect and keep a child free from harm; and 3) meet your health, education and emotional needs.

Family Support Team (FST): A group of individuals meeting under DFS authorization who make recommendations regarding your permanency plan. People, who should be part of the FST are: Your parents, placement provider, case manager, case manager's supervisor, GAL/CASA, juvenile officer, your parents' attorney, and most importantly, YOU! Other people that may be invited are: Your ILP Specialist, teachers, therapist, or others as necessary.

Family Support Team (FST) Meetings: This is a meeting held to determine the appropriateness of a youth's placement, the progress towards short and long term goals, and the need for continued care.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL): The adult who represents your best interest in all Family or Juvenile Court proceedings. This may or may not be an attorney. Your GAL is: _____ .

Independent Living Program (ILP) Specialist: An individual who works in the youth's home area to provide or arrange for services to prepare youths for independent living. Your ILP Specialist is: _____ .

Lifebook: A folder, packet, or picture album consisting of personal mementos, pictures, birth information, family information, religious information, placement history, life and growth information, and any other information important to you. A lifebook should be maintained for each youth in out-of-home care.

Out-of-Home Care: When you are in the custody of DFS and placed somewhere other than your own home, you are considered to be in out-of-home care. Options for this type of placement would include foster homes, residential treatment facilities, transitional living programs, relative homes and independent living arrangements.

Permanency Plan: A written document which describes the social and child welfare services and activities to be provided by DFS and other state and local agencies for the purpose of achieving a permanent placement for you.

Youth Advisory Board (YAB): A board consisting of youth in out-of-home care, ages 16-21, who have successfully completed ILP Life Skills classes. These boards provide out-of-home care youth the opportunity to have input into the policy and procedures that affect their lives. There is a Youth Advisory Board in each of the seven Area Offices in the state.

Youth representatives from each of the seven Area Boards are selected by their ILP Specialist and/or Area board peers to serve on the **State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB)**. The State Board meets quarterly with Central Office staff to report on local activities and provide input and make recommendations regarding policy and procedures that affect youth in out-of-home care. Board members represent the interests of all youth in placement and strive to improve the quality and scope of services that are provided by the agency, the Court and the community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

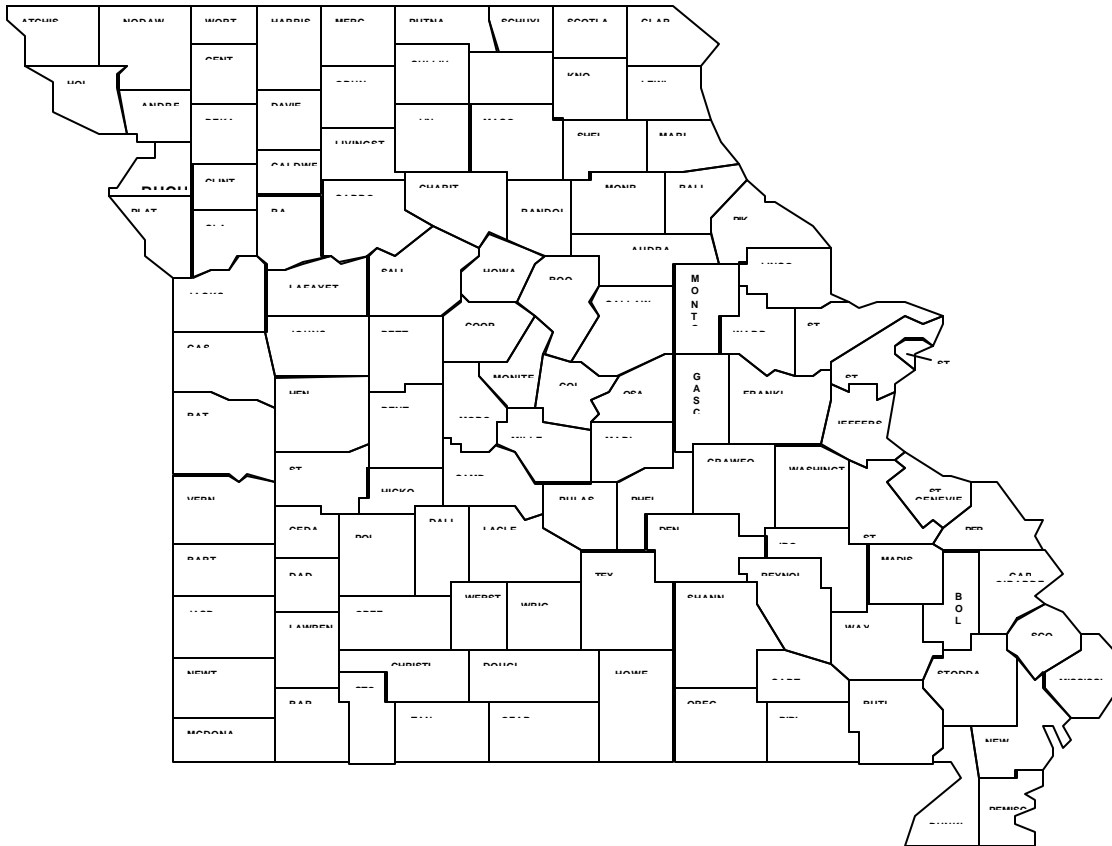


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Area Independent Living Offices

Missouri is divided into seven service areas outlined on the state map below. If you want to learn more about independent living services, call the County Office in your Area, closest to where you live, and ask to speak to the Independent Living Specialist.



Area 1

Buchanan County
816-387-2533

Lafayette County
660-259-2294

Area 5

Jackson County
816-889-2185

Area 2

Boone County
573-884-4197

Jefferson County
636-797-9678

Shelby County
573-633-2550

Area 6

St. Louis City
314-340-7185/7184

Area 3

St. Francois County
573-431-6592

Cape Girardeau County
573-290-5612

Area 7

St. Louis County
314-426-8433

Area 4

Greene County
417-895-6166

Jasper County
417-629-3906

Phelps County
573-368-2425